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Back In Battle

When Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor resigned as chief of staff, he wrote a book. It was a blast at the Eisenhower administration. He called it "The Uncertain Trumpet" after the Biblical text "For if the trumpet give forth an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

Now the handsome paratrooper is back in Washington ready to orchestrate some trumpet notes of his own. He will be special adviser to President Kennedy, operating as a background, superstaff counselor.

It is a good appointment and will fill a gaping hole. Since the Cuban debacle, when all his military advice went sour, Mr. Kennedy has felt a desperate need for a strong-minded, free-wheeling professional to use as a sounding board.

He appointed Gen. Taylor first to conduct a no-holds-barred post-mortem of the Cuban fiasco. That chore has been finished. The report went to the President alone. It will not be made public. Its purpose was to cure mistakes, not find a public scapegoat for what happened in the Bay of Pigs.

From that report probably will come new decision procedures for the President. Presumably the "dirty tricks" end of the Central Intelligence Agency will be divorced from its intelligence functions. No longer will the objectivity of CIA's information be compromised by its advocacy of undercover operations. Taylor eventually may replace Allen Dulles as CIA's head, but there is no hurry about that. The general proved in his ruckus with the Eisenhower administration that he is an independent thinker who places his convictions above the main chance.

For now, he will hairshirt every major decision. He can give the President badly needed, unbiased competence. He can make sure that the trumpet sounds clear. With the job of preparing to the battle of Berlin already behind schedule, there is no time to lose.